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ABSTRACT

The functional theories of James Britton and M.A.K. Halliday are compatible in that they both (1) view language use as functional and situationally determined; (2) recognize a developmental process that involves learning the rules of use of the mature functions; (3) recognize a participatory role of language for doing and a spectatorial role for language as reflecting, learning, and shaping; and (4) view text as influenced by context. Since creative drama involves people in using language and other forms of symbolization as they enact and reflect either to relive an experience from their own social situation or to try on another version of self and situation, these theories of language functions can enhance a teacher's understanding of the linguistic demands and opportunities for development inherent in a dramatic situation. (HOD)

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"Using Creative Drama to Develop Functions of Language"

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Abstract

The emphasis which the participants of the First International Conference on the Teaching of English placed on symbolic or spectatorial uses of language and the centrality of talk and drama in developing this function of language is noted. Furner cites John Dixon's statement in the 1974 postscript to the Dartmouth report (Growth Through English, Third edition, 1975) that participatory uses of language were overlooked due to lack of a general theory of language functions. Using the theories of James Britton and M.A.K. Halliday she illustrates through participant involvement how creative drama can serve to develop a full range of language functions.

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Introduction

A major contribution of the First International Conference on the Teaching of English, the Dartmouth Conference held in 1966, was its emphasis on the symbolic representational role of language and the processes through which humans seek to make reality from experiences.

Our recognition of the human as "a proliferator of images" in "need of symbolization" (Langer, 1960, p. 41) was reinforced, as was awareness that it is this very process of representation that separates man from other animals. (Britton, 1971) Britton pointed out that:

> we construct a representation of the world as we experience it, and from this representation, this cumulative record of our own past, we generate expectations concerning the future; expectations which, as moment by moment the future becomes the present, enable us to interpret the present. (1970, p. 12)

Britton noted that language "is only one way of symbolizing what is in the universe, and we cannot explain the particular workings of language unless we see their relations with other ways of symbolizing and with the nature of the symbolizing process itself (or with what is common to all ways)" (1970, p. 13).

The need for students, like adults, to engage in these processes was stressed by Dartmouth participants.

> Talking it over, thinking it over, and (as confidence is gained) writing, can be natural parts of taking account of new experience (cognitively and affectively).
>
> . . . Like the artist, children engaged in these activities are adopting a special role to their selves and to their experience, the role in some sense of a spectator rather than a participant. (Dixon, 1975, p. 28)

Dixon, described "The role of spectator -- of an attentive, immersed onlooker -- /as/ a link between the child and the artist" (1975, p. 29).

Britton's theory of function of language made a distinction between the participant role and the spectator role, based on the "two different relationships between what is being said (or written or thought) and what is being done, . . ." (1971, p. 209-210). In the participant role language is used to get something done, to effect ongoing events, or achieve any other practical outcome. Contrastively, in the spectator role one is "concerned with events not now taking place (past events or imagined events), /and is/ concerned with them per se . . ." (p. 209). Language is used as an end in itself to create a representation of experience.

At Dartmouth, great emphasis was placed on the development of the spectator role through language in operation, rather than through a dummy-run approach in which "skills" become ends in themselves. (Dixon, 1975)

Talk and drama were seen as connected and foundational to language in operation, since both exist naturally in young children and since talk is involved in all interactions. Interaction was essential to uses of talk and drama for personal discovery. Talk was recognized as arising from doing things together. Dartmouth participant Barnes noted that:

> It is through . . . talk that children can best find out in exchange with one another what are their responses to an experience, real or symbolic, and help one another to come to terms with it. . . . (Dixon, quoting Barnes, 1975, p. 36)

Drama, an improvisational art form through which persons imagine, enact, and reflect on human experience, was seen by Barnes as arising inevitably from talk but differing

> . . . from other talk in three ways: movement and gesture play a larger part in the expression of meaning; a group working together upon an improvisation needs more deliberately and consciously to collaborate . . .; the narrative framework allows for repetition and provides a unity that enables action more easily to take on symbolic status. (Dixon, quoting Barnes, 1975, p. 37)

Barnes cited the value of drama to permit " . . . a child [to try] out a version of himself and his possiblities without committing himself permanently, . . ." (Dixon quoting Barnes, 1975, p. 37-38).

He also recognized an opportunity in drama work for development of language facility, by asking pupils to recreate social situations using language appropriate to that situation, but noted that the symbolic function should predominate. He was quoted by Dixon as follows:

> For those adolescents who are deprived of a wide range of social experience, dramatic re-creation of realistic situations may be an important way of developing control of a range of registers. It is here suggested, however, that this should be subordinated to the symbolic function of drama, primarily because drama may be, for many deprived children, the most important creative medium, since it demands less verbal explicitness and is inseparable from expressive movement. (1975, p. 41)

As a result of Dartmouth, language arts programs of the late 1960's and early 1970's placed greater emphasis on spectatorial, symbolic uses of language. Teachers began to incorporate talk and various types of drama experiences into class activities.

However, the renewal was short-lived. By 1974, when James Dixon wrote the chapter entitled "In the Perspective of the Seventies" for the third edition of Growth Through English, the Dartmouth report, he recognized, amid the context of the back-to-basics movement, that the Seminar and its reports "focussed attention on some directions in English teaching, while neglecting others" (1975, p. 123). He noted that the Seminar "made a vital contribution to our thinking about language and learning in the

spectator role. . . ." (p. 123), while leaving unexplored the role of participant. He continued:

> It's a very large body of language to neglect. Such a thing couldn't have happened at Dartmouth if we had had a general theory of language functions as our common stock. (Dixon, 1975, p. 123)

Based on exposure to James Britton's (1970, 1971, 1975, 1977) theory of language functions, I began to explore the values of drama not only to permit symbolic representation in the role of spectator, but to develop the participant role. (Furner, 1976) This consideration has more recently been enhanced by insights from Michael Halliday's (1971, 1975, 1978) theory of language functions and what Halliday (1978) has called the social-functional approach to language as a meaning system.

In the remainder of the paper I propose to briefly summarize Britton's and Halliday's theories of language functions and to illustrate how creative drama can serve to develop both Britton's participatory and spectatorial roles of language use or what Halliday termed the "pragmatic uses of language, those which demand a response, and represent a way of participating in a situation, and . . . 'mathetic' uses of language, those which do not demand a response but represent rather a way of observing and of learning as one observes" (1978, p. 54).

Theories of Language Functions

Britton's theory of language functions, as indicated above, is centered on the role which the speaker/writer takes on in relation to his/her subject, audience, and situation. Specifically, roles differ depending on whether the linguistic construct is for "operating in actuality via the representation" -- the participant role, or "working upon the representation without seeking outcomes in actuality" -- the spectator role (Britton, 1975, p. 80).

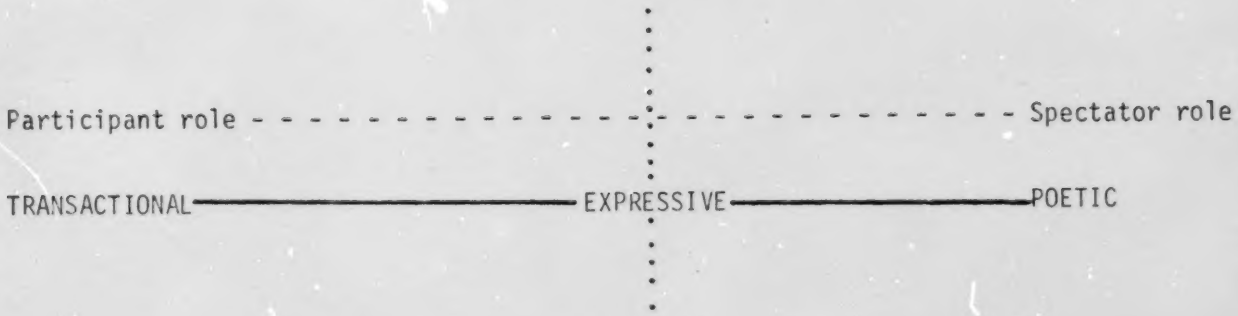
Britton's schema relates all uses of language, whether in the participant role or spectator role, to three main function categories: Transactional, Expressive, and Poetic. As can be seen in Diagram 1 the role of participant is carried out through the transactional function of language, while the spectator role is manifested most completely in the poetic function where language as a verbal art becomes an end in itself. Centered between these contrasting functions is the expressive function which, according to Britton, "straddles the participant/spectator distinction, . . ." (1971, p. 210). In this central position, language in the expressive function is "free to move easily from participant role into spectator and vice versa: . . . and the borderline between the two modes will be a shadowy one" (Britton, 1975, p. 82). As shown in Diagram 2, Britton sees the expressive function as foundational, not only in the sense that a young child's early language is expressive, later developing into the differentiated forms, but that it is the mode in which "we frame the tentative first drafts of new ideas: . . ." (1975, p. 82).

About the features of the expressive function Britton said:

> Firstly, expressive language is language close to the self. It has the functions of revealing the speaker, verbalizing his consciousness, and displaying his close relation with a listener or reader. Secondly, much expressive language is not made explicit, because the speaker/writer relies upon his listener/reader to interpret what is said in the light of a common understanding (that is, a shared general context of the past), and to interpret their immediate situation (what is happening around them) in a way similar to his own. . . . Thirdly, since expressive language submits itself to the free flow of ideas and feelings, it is relatively unstructured. (1975, p. 90)

Britton (1975) suggested that as we grow in language maturity we learn the rules of use -- that is the principles which govern the shape of our message in the three functions: the organization, the background necessary, and the relationship to listener/reader.

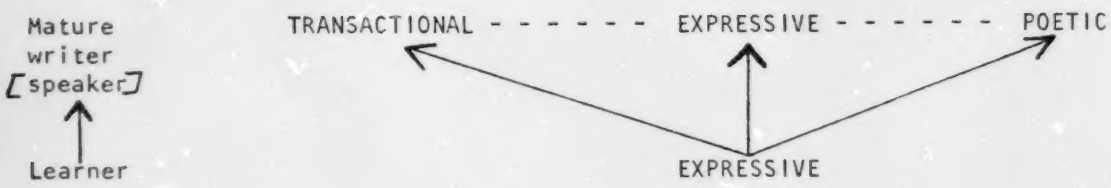
Diagram 1



The three main function categories

Britton et al., (1975, p. 81)

Diagram 2



The expressive as a matrix for the development of other forms of writing

Britton et al., (1975, p. 83)

Britton (1975) noted that speech includes a wider range of uses of the expressive than does writing. Examples included exclamations both expressed to a listener and when there is no listener present; more extended remarks to ourselves to express feelings, mood, opinions, and immediate preoccupations, or, contrastively, to a listener with whom the speaker shares a context; and finally, interpersonal expressive in which there is an audience of two or more and any listener may become a speaker.

As noted previously, transactional language is language to get things done: to inform, to advise or persuade, or to instruct. Britton (1975) has subdivided the transactional function into the informative and conative, or language to make information available and language to attempt to change someone's behavior, attitude, or opinion. The utterance is a means to an end and is organized to achieve that end taking into account the particular audience and context.

Contrastively, poetic language is an end in itself, a verbal construct or verbal art. Words, sounds, ideas, the composer's feelings are all selected to create "an arrangement, a formal pattern", "a unity, a construct discrete from actuality" (Britton, 1975, pp. 90, 94).

In developing a schema for the analysis of student writing, Britton (1975) drew on James Moffett's (1968) scale of abstraction. The conative and informative were further divided according to the purpose and the relation of the speaker/writer to audience and subject. The conative was subdivided into regulative, where compliance is assumed, and persuasive, where the composer attempts to affect the opinions, attitudes, and behaviors of the audience. (Britton, 1971, 1975)

As shown in Diagram 3, the informative was divided into seven subdivisions, representing distance between the speaker/writer and actual experience, as well as differences in intent.

Diagram 3

Subdivisions of the Informative

Record: eye-witness account or running commentary

Report: narrative/descriptive accounts of particular events -- retrospective

Generalized narrative or descriptive information: tied to particular events, but expressed in generalized form

Analogic, low level of generalization: generalizations, but loosely related

Analogic: generalizations related hierarchically or logically

Analogic-tautologic (speculative): speculation about generalizations, open ended

Tautologic: hypotheses and deductions from them, backed by logical argumentation.

(Britton, 1971, 1975)

Britton described these subdivisions, as did Moffett, as developmental with more abstract processes being dependent on earlier ones, as well as being changes in perspective in dealing with a particular subject.

Halliday's theory of language as meaning potential and as a form of behavior potential is compatible with Britton's view of language functions. Several fundamental concepts underlie Halliday's "social-functional approach to language" (1978, p. 36).

Halliday described culture as: "a semiotic system, a system of meanings or information that is encoded in the behaviour potential of the members, including their verbal potential -- that is their linguistic system" (1975, p. 36). In developing language the child learns how to mean.

Language then serves as an effective means of cultural transmission, as the child participates in everyday interactions. This is a developmental process. The child first develops a functional system expressed through a personal protolanguage. During the early years, as the child's range of meanings, social roles, and situations expands, language gradually evolves to the open-ended multifunctional, multi-level adult system, the potential of which is explored and expanded lifelong through use.

Halliday's (1975) theory is most easily understood by following the course of language development of the boy, Nigel, whose language he studied from Phase I (9 months), the child's initial functional-linguistic system, through Phase II, the transition from that system to that of the adult language, on to Phase III, (24 months), the learning of the adult language.

Halliday noted that:

> The child begins (Phase I) by developing a semiotic of his own, which is not derived from the adult linguistic system that surrounds him; it is a language whose elements are simple content/expression pairs, having meaning in certain culturally defined and possibly universal functions. The functions can be enumerated tentatively as follows: instrumental, regulatory, interactional, personal, heuristic, imaginative. (1978, pp. 70-71)

These six developmental functions, which appeared in the order listed along with a seventh, the informative, which appeared in Phase II (22 months), are shown as defined by Halliday (1975, 1978) in Diagram 4.

Diagram 4

Initial Language Functions

1. Instrumental ('I want'): satisfying material needs
2. Regulatory ('do as I tell you'): controlling the behaviors of others
3. Interactional ('me and you'): getting along with other people
4. Personal ('here I come'): identifying and expressing the self

5. Heuristic ('tell me why'): exploring the world around and inside one
6. Imaginative ('let's pretend'): creating a world of one's own
7. Informative ('I've got something to tell you'): communicating new information.

(Halliday, 1978, pp. 19-20)

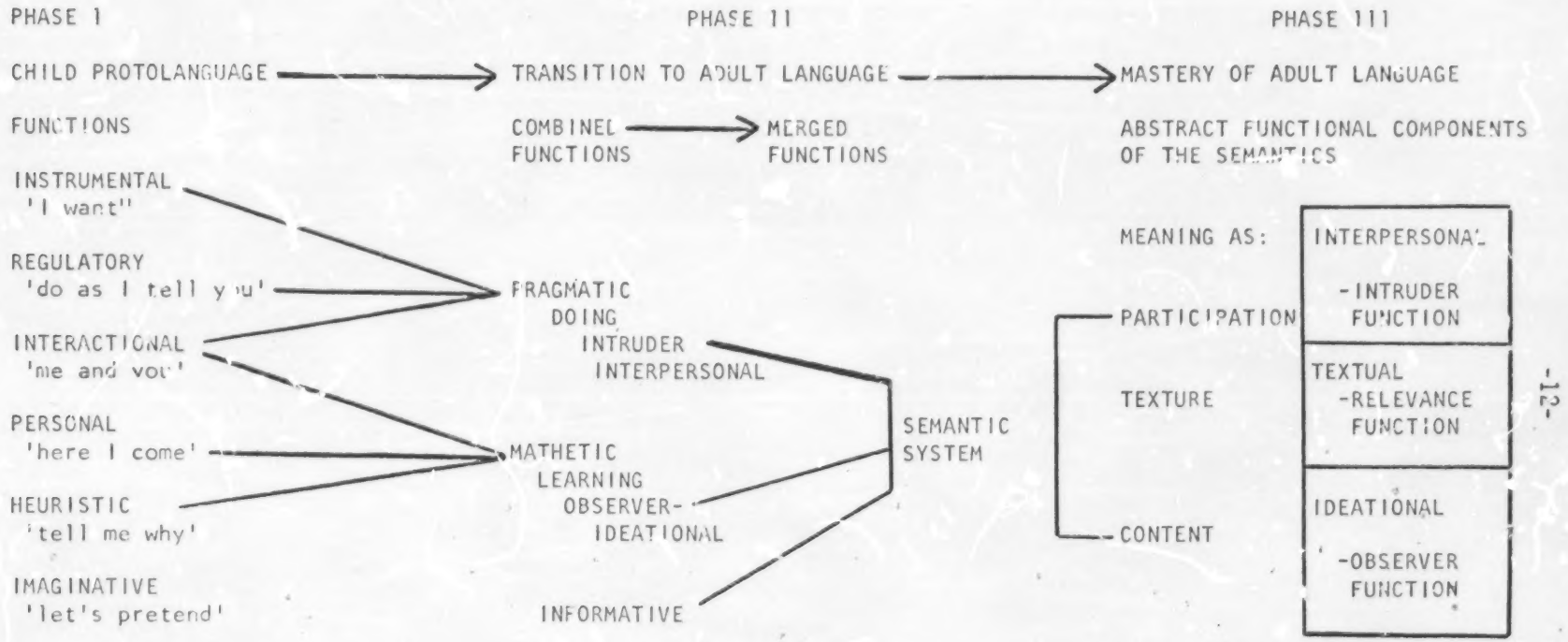
As shown in Diagram 5, Phase II, the transitional stage, evidenced several important developments. The child adopted the adult linguistic system rather than the child protolanguage. This involved mastery of a three-level system having content, expression, and wording, the lexicogrammatical system. It also involved a distinction of language functions into two broad types: language as doing (pragmatic) growing out of instrumental and regulatory functions and language as learning (mathetic), a combination of the personal and heuristic, with the interactional function contributing to both. (Halliday, 1975) Halliday stated that:

> The child learns at this stage that in any use of language he is essentially being either an observer or an intruder. He is an observer to the extent that the language is serving as a means whereby he encodes his own experience of the phenomena around him, while remaining apart. He is an intruder to the extent that he is using language to participate, as a means of action in the context of situation. (1975, pp. 29-30)

Also in Phase II the principle of dialogue was mastered, "namely the adoption, assignment and acceptance (or non-acceptance) of communicative roles, which are social roles of a special kind, those that come into being only through language" (Halliday, 1978, pp. 71-72). Similarly, the child grew to understand "that language can be used as a substitute for shared experience, to impart information not previously known to the hearer; . . ." as the informative function appeared (Halliday, 1978, p. 116).

DIAGRAM 5

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LANGUAGE AS A SOCIAL-FUNCTIONAL MEANING SYSTEM



(HALLIDAY, 1975 1978)

-12-

Phase II, then, is characterized by the incorporation into the grammar of the pragmatic/mathetic distinction, forming the basis for a functional distinction between the interpersonal and ideational components in the adult system. Also, the child begins to build the third component of the adult language, "the 'textual' one; . . . what makes it possible to create text, language that is structured in relation to the context of its use (the 'context of situation')" (Halliday, 1978, p. 72).

During this transitional stage the child evolves through three stages: first the pragmatic/matnetic functions serve as alternatives, each utterance is one or the other; secondly, they become differences of emphasis, "every utterance is predominantely one or the other (mainly mathetic/ideational but also pragmatic/interpersonal; or vice versa)" and finally "every utterance is both (both ideational and interpersonal)" (Halliday, 1978, p. 72).

So by about 24 months the child enters Phase III, a lifelong process of mastering adult language. The developmental "'functions' have changed their character, to become abstract components of the semantics, simultaneous modes of meaning each of which presupposes the presence of the other. . . " Halliday, 1978, p. 72). Rather than the one to one relationship in which each utterance had one function/use, each utterance is plurifunctional within "situations or settings of language use" (Halliday, 1975, p. 78).

Adult language is stratified into a three-level coding system made up of a semantics, a lexicogrammar, and a phonology. Further, as shown in Diagram 5, the semantic system is organized into functional components: the ideational, ("language as reflection"), the interpersonal ("language as action"), and the textual ("language as texture, in relation to the environment") (Halliday, 1978, p. 187).

Language in operation, or text, "is a product of infinitely many simultaneous and successive choices in meaning, . . ." (Halliday, 1978, p. 125) determined by the environment or social context for the text. Language is variable according to both user and use. Variation according to the user, or dialect, is "determined by 'who you are', your regional and/or social place of origin and/or adoption." Variation according to use, or register, is "determined by 'what you are doing', the nature of the ongoing social activity" (Halliday, 1978, p. 185). Since the range of activities in which a person typically engages is largely determined by the structure of society, register and dialect are interconnected. The semantic configuration, or register, of a text is determined by the situation variables field, the text generating activity, tenor, the role relationships of the participants, and mode, the rhetorical modes adopted (whether spoken or written, formal or informal). Halliday stated:

> . . . These situational variables are related respectively to the ideational, interpersonal, and textual components of the semantic system: meaning as content (the observer function of language), meaning as participation (the intruder function) and meaning as texture (the relevance function). . . . (1978, p. 125)

He said that in learning language the child

> . . . builds up a model of the social system. This follows a little way behind his learning of grammar and semantics . . ., though it is essentially part of a single unitary process of language development. In the broadest terms, from dialectal variation he learns to construe the patterns of social hierarchy, and from the variation of the 'register' kind he gains insight into the structure of knowledge. (Halliday, 1978, p. 191)

A Comparison of Theories

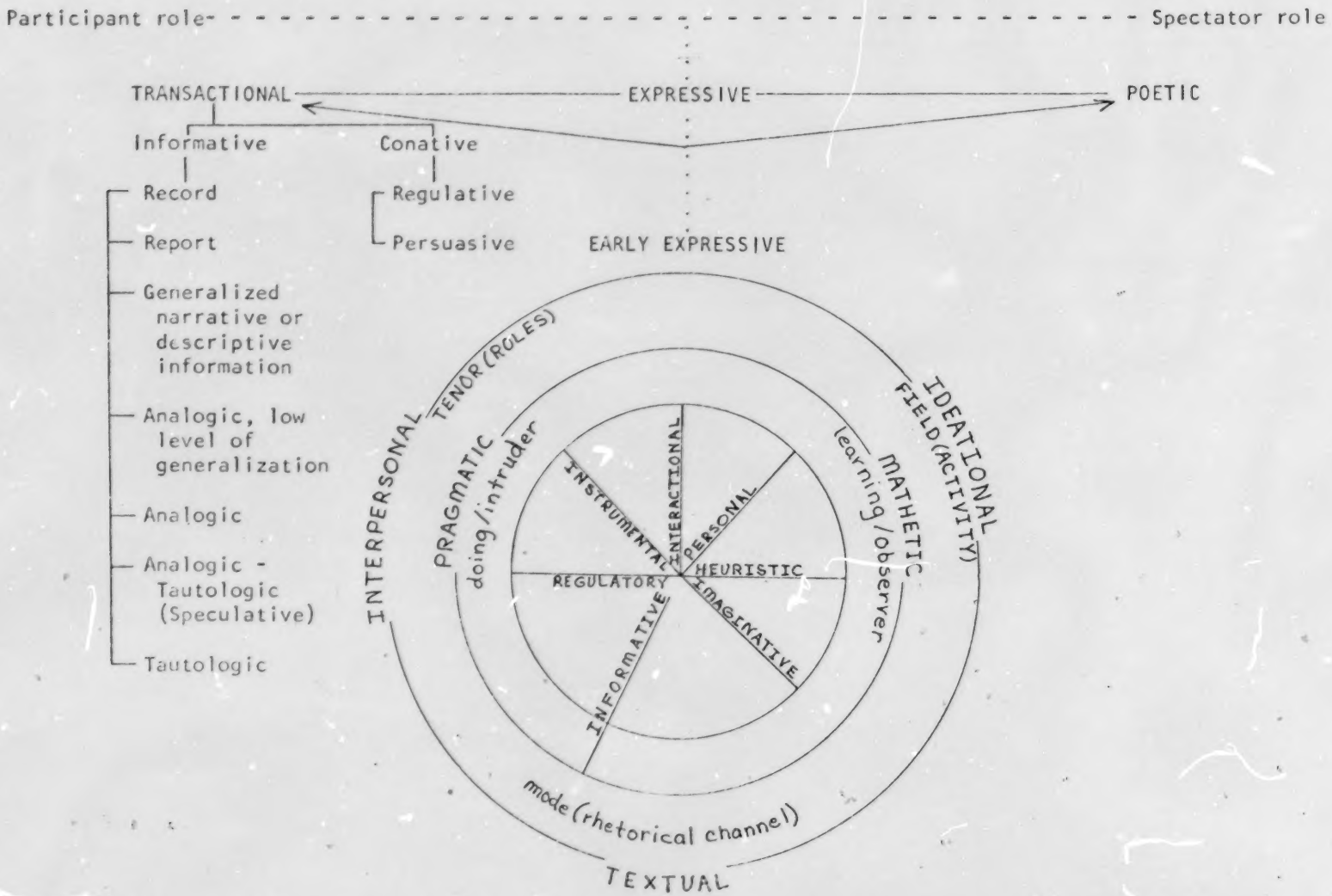
The functional theories of Britton and Halliday are compatible and together fill the gap which Dixon (1975) perceived in the work of Dartmouth participants -- the need for a general theory of language functions -- to guide educators in shaping experiences to extend both the symbolic and linguistic facility of young people.

Diagram 6 highlights similarities in the two theories. Both view language use as functional and situationally determined. Both recognize a developmental process which involves learning the rules of use of the mature functions.

Both recognize a participatory role of language for doing and a spectatorial role for language as reflecting, learning, shaping. Halliday's theory seems best represented by concentric circles since he describes one as operating both as intruder and observer, making choices within the interpersonal, ideational, and textual components of the meaning system in creating text. Britton recognized this duality of functions, through the expressive, but perceived a greater distinction of functions when either role was manifested most fully in language. The inverted triangle represents both the overlap and distinction between functions.

Britton's theory emphasizes differentiation of functions in development, whereas Halliday stressed expansion and merger of structural, functional, and cultural components of the linguistic system arising from and incorporating the initial developmental functions as the "generalized social contexts of language use" (1975, pp. 57-58). These generalized uses parallel the subdivisions which Britton identified, for example, when the merger of the "imaginative and informative functions call for the narrative mode (within the ideational component) as distinct from simple observation

Diagram 6



The Functional, Situational, Developmental Aspects of Language as a Meaning System

and recall" (Halliday, 1975, p. 58).

In both views "text" is influenced by context, or is situationally determined. Britton noted differences in oral and written communication, the purpose of the speaker/writer, and the relationship to the audience and the subject, while Halliday cited choices in the semantic system influenced by field (the text-generating activity), tenor (role relationships), and mode (the rhetorical channel).

Since creative drama involves people in using language and other forms of symbolization as they enact and reflect either to pre-live or relive an experience from their own social situation or to try on another version of self and situation, these theories of language functions can enhance a teacher's understanding of the linguistic demands and opportunities for development inherent in a dramatic situation, permitting more purposeful guidance of dramatic experiences toward their fullest potential.

Developing Functions of Language through Creative Drama

A shared experience will be helpful in exploring how various functions of language are called for and can be developed through creative drama. Therefore, I will ask your participation in some dramatic activity, assuring you that everyone will participate at once -- with no audience and no evaluation.

Practical Work*

1. Listening Exercise: Self, room, outside room, self
2. Challenge of signal with practice as they introduce themselves to another nearby.

*An excellent source for specific suggestions concerning drama activities is Development through Drama by Brian Way, Humanities Press, 1967.

3. Listening: Will make sounds that are the sound track for a film. Close eyes and visualize what is on the screen.
   a. Tapping. Be in threes and share what you saw.
   b. Recording, Scott Joplin, "The Entertainer," Classic Ragtime from Rare Piano Rolls (Biograph, BLP 1013Q, Stereo, Vol. 4, 1974). Share what you saw in threes.
4. In threes make a still photo to go with the music sound track of one of your ideas or a merger of them. Minute to decide on your situation, who you are and what you are doing. Still photo at signal. Bring to life with action and sound with the music and freeze it when music fades.
5. In threes you will be persons discussing a form of entertainment that might go with that music.
   a. Parent and two young people who wish to attend that form of entertainment. Parent disapproves. Still photo. Bring to life.
   b. Peers any age -- you decide -- planning how to spend an evening out. Two of you want to attend this form of entertainment, one does not. Still photo and bring it to life to discuss what you will do.
   c. Peers - a different age and status than your last. You decide. You are all soon to attend this form of entertainment for the first time. You are anticipating it before you go. Still photo and bring it to life.
   d. A travel director with two important local officials planning the itinerary for an important dignitary who will visit your locale. The travel director feels this form of entertainment should be included, one official enjoys the entertainment but is uncertain, while the other has never attended but disapproves. Still photo

and bring it to life.

e. Decide to be one of those four groups who is now at the entertainment form. Still photo will come to life with the music and freeze into a still photo as it fades.

Now let's consider how that brief dramatic activity drew on your personal resources, including facility with various functions of language. Clearly, you assumed both participatory (pragmatic) and spectatorial (mathetic) roles: participatory, transactional language was called upon as you comprehended and responded to suggestions as to what to do and who to be and as you planned roles and still photos. The spectatorial role was employed, probably in the expressive mode, as you created verbal images to capture and share the visual images associated with the sound tracks.

Participatory, expressive may have been used as you introduced yourselves, and perhaps as you informed others about film images. However, use of the spectatorial, expressive was clearly probable, if one shifted away from making a record or reporting to recreating the experience. Had someone been so moved by the sound or his/her film images to move beyond immediate concern for the sharing to, like the artist, give full attention to the shaping of the experience, the poetic function would have been employed. While use of poetic language was unlikely in this situation, it is clearly possible in dramatic experiences which involve greater absorption and involvement.

Looking further one discovers an exciting duality in the language functions used in drama which underlies its potential for development of the "voices" which the individual controls.

The still photos brought to life while discussing entertainment involved imagined events in which language was used as an end in itself, not to seek outcomes in actuality -- the spectatorial role. Yet, as shown in Diagram 7, as roles were taken language was used, respectively, to instruct, advise or control; to persuade; to wonder, anticipate, or imagine; to recall experience, inform, or persuade; and to record or interact. Many uses of participatory language, either transactional or expressive, were involved, determined by the particular roles and situations decided upon. Certain of the situations, again dependent on the roles and situations created in various groups, opened possibilities for spectatorial, expressive language if one shaped an image of what the experience would be like or recalled a prior experience more for its own sake than to inform or persuade.

Diagram 7

Functions of Language Potential in the Still Photos re Entertainment

1.	Parent-children	Participatory, transactional to instruct, advise, or control
2.	Peers deciding	Participatory, transactional to persuade, or expressive (participatory or spectatorial) to interact
3.	Peers anticipating	Spectatorial, expressive to wonder, anticipate, or imagine
4.	Travel director and clients	Participatory, expressive (or spectatorial, expressive) to recall experience, or participatory, to inform or persuade.
5.	At the entertainment	Expressive to record or interact (participatory or spectatorial)

As the situation was enacted from various perspectives, "text", or ongoing language, was created drawing on the ideational/observer component, the interpersonal/participant function, and the textual/relevance function to communicate meanings through a register appropriate the activity (field),

role relationships among the participants (tenor), and to spoken language (mode).

Through creative drama young people can operate in a "real world" using language for all of its functions, within and appropriate to the social context, without the limits or burdens of their own particular reality. Such use will not only build sensitivity to others both within and outside their personal environment (Way, 1967), but will expand linguistic facility with no fear that concern for register need overshadow the symbolic function of drama. (Dixon citing Barnes, 1975) For as Britton and Halliday have demonstrated, language as symbolization of meaning only fulfills its role to the extent that it is appropriate to the social-functional context in which it occurs.

Teachers aware of a general theory of language functions can better guide drama experiences, not to overtly teach the theory, nor to prescribe the types of language used; but rather, to suggest situations and roles of significance to young people. As the variety of social-functional contexts experienced through drama is enhanced text appropriate to person, purpose, and situation will emerge, as it does in all real uses of language.

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